

Matthew 16:13-20

"Who Do You Say That I Am?"

With revelation comes confession. With confession comes revelation. The two go together. You cannot have one without the other.

Most often we think of confession as something we just did at the beginning of this service. We confessed our sins. Confession means coming clean with what we have done wrong. Confession is good for the soul they say. And it is! With it comes forgiveness and reconciliation and freedom from the guilt of sins.

But there is another side of confession. What is confessed and what we speak of is revealed in the Scriptures. That is, to speak of what we believe. And in this sense, to confess what we believe means that we are speaking the same thing. We will in just short bit speak together the same thing in the Apostles' Creed.

In our gospel today Jesus asks His disciples "What do others say the Son of Man is?" What is their confession about Jesus? As we find out, they are speaking the same thing about Jesus.

Some say, John the Baptist A cosmic Policeman of sorts. You better get yourself right with God. "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Some say Elijah — Miracle worker, success, and prosperity ministry. Elijah's success against the prophets of the pagan god, Baal at Mt. Carmel is just one example. At the end Elijah's ministry God took up into heaven in a chariot,

Some say Jeremiah — The doom and gloom prophet who spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple of the LORD. After the fall, he was exiled to Egypt because the people did not want to hear Jeremiah say, "I told you so."

Then Jesus turns to the Disciples and asks, "Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter speaks up first, "You are the Messiah, Son of the living God."

Jesus blesses Simon Peter, "Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in Heaven." Peter got it right. Peter confessed what had been revealed to Him by God. Revelation leads to confession. Confession comes through revelation. And there is something more. With right confession comes blessing. Though the blessings that God gives may not seem like blessing as the world see them. The worldly blessing, that is, the worldly things and possessions and wealth can vanish like smoke as Isaiah proclaims (Is. 51:6). They may wear out like our clothes. Here today, gone tomorrow.

The blessing that come from Christ endure all things, they are eternal. These blessings may not be seen today but are received by faith. Peter received these blessings from our Lord. They were not taken from him even though he had many ups and downs, and struggled with fear and doubt. These are also for you today, for all who confess Jesus as the Christ Son of the Living God. They are for you

no matter what you are going through today or what you may feel may happen to you. Blessed you for you are children of God.

The three are: Upon this rock I will build my Church. Upon the rock of the confession of "Jesus is the Christ," the savior of the world the Church is built. On our confession of the same God uses us to build the church, through our words and deeds that point to Jesus as the Christ and our savior. Though we may see the fruit of this blessing in our lives God is blessing us and building His Church.

The second blessing Peter receives is, "The gates of hell will not prevail against it." What is attacking you? The sin and evil in our lives, even if it seems all too powerful or all too threatening against the power of Christ and His cross, it cannot win the day. What is attacking your faith or tempting you, or causing you to despair, you are not alone in the fight. On your own you will not stand against the gates of hell. The one you confess as Christ fought for you on the cross, and rose victorious from the grave. He still fights for you. Satan may try to make it look like you are losing, but don't believe it for one minute. Trust in Christ's promise for to you.

Third, "I give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven."

Through preaching the word Jesus is working forgiveness. This is the forgiveness won for you on the cross. It is a forgiveness greater than any sin. It is the forgiveness you hear each Sunday and it is for you. This forgiveness is not of man, but it comes from the powerful Word of God. This forgiveness is for you even if you wonder if God loves you. The cross proves that God does, the empty tomb proves that His love is not dead. But alive. And His forgiveness is alive.

All this has been revealed to each of us. All these great and precious promises given by Christ. May we confess who Jesus is to the world. Though the world may not welcome such news, it is news that the world needs to hear. They all, your friends and neighbors need to hear how much God loved them and how Jesus the Christ died for them so that they can have life and the hope of eternal life.

Today we are sent, not only with words, but as living sacrifices as our spiritual worship. The liturgy this morning continues, the work of the people goes on as we leave here today. This sacrifice is not a sacrifice to death, but a living sacrifice of God's love shown and acted upon our neighbor, in loving service, to be a blessing to those who need a blessing.

Who do you say that I am? We heard how Peter answered it. "You are the Christ, Son of the living God." The question was also put to the disciples. It is also asked of each of us today. The truth has been revealed today to you. The truth of Jesus' death and resurrection. The truth of His forgiveness. And the truth of His salvation. Now it is time to confess, to speak the same thing as a church. To speak it as a gathered family of God, and then to be living as God's people in the world. Blessed are you....

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.